1:Williams E,G-5 (1923-1925) 1930
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XV

THE SPIRITUAL SUBSTITUTE

7/1 8/1 THE two following chapters, more than any others, show what difficulties may attend even a work of mere ethnography. When the observer is confronted by a mass of vague and very tangled beliefs, it becomes a rather delicate task to set them down in a manner that will be intelligible to the reader and yet have an honest regard to their limitations. The first difficulty arises in the fact that a native's beliefs are largely inexplicit; he has never tried to frame them in words, and thus one is sometimes compelled to fall back on inference. The next difficulty arises in the fact that of even the more explicit beliefs many turn out to be mutually irreconcilable. Whereas a modern educated mind must be continually raking over its beliefs and conscientiously casting out any inconsistencies, the mind of the native (like the mind of an uneducated modern—only more so) remains blissfully unaware of these inconsistencies. Thirdly, the native's beliefs are not always firmly held. There is no such thing as strict orthodoxy, and, indeed, it may be claimed that abstract belief, compared with practice and ritual, is to him of small account. Where we find uniformity of practice we may also find a variety of theoretical explanations, and the same informant may cheerfully switch from one explanation to another, or simply declare that 'he doesn't know'. In fine, natives are unable or reluctant to formulate their beliefs; the beliefs when formulated are often inconsistent with one another: and not less often they are light, inexact, variable things, qualified with a non-committal 'perhaps' or 'who knows?'

7/1 Those beliefs which relate to the spiritual and the supernatural are probably hazier and more confused than any other. It is the business of these chapters to set them down as far as possible systematically, yet resisting the temptation to manipulate or trim them, or to force them into a system that may be intelligible to the reader but does not neces-

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000 of roasting or squashing him in some symbolic guise. It is not necessary to burn him like Guy Fawkes in a life-size effigy. Anything, however small and insignificant, that will serve to typify the victim will serve also as an object upon which the emotion of the sorcerer may spend itself. In the manual procedure of magic, which is in origin a representation of the hoped-for result, the importance of such symbols will be evident, and we may devote some attention to them. In fact the concept of spontaneous magic which we have so far formed may be more clearly expressed as 'the *symbolic* representation of a hoped-for result'. The real subjects and objects which would participate in the hoped-for result are represented by symbols in the imaginary forecast. And this forecast may appear very fragmentary, simply reproducing one of two salient factors. Furthermore, the association which justifies the symbol may be astonishingly remote.

811 789 845 An example will show how flimsy may be the structure of the magical representation. There was a youth of Wasida who paid court to a girl of the neighbourhood but was rejected in favour of a rival. The young man did not accept his disappointment as a philosopher should, but determined to bide his time and be revenged. Now there is a certain blue berry in the bush which is remarkable for the fact that it grows always two by two together. The disappointed suitor secretly obtained a pair of these twin berries, crushed them together with some lime, and decorated his face with the resultant pigment—a stripe on either cheek. Now he makes it his business to encounter the girl (who is by this time securely married to the other party). All unsuspecting she looks at his face and observes the two streaks of paint. Nothing is said, but the young man, satisfied with the mere glance, retires to the seclusion of the bush, scrapes the berry pigment off his cheeks, wraps it in a leaf, and stuffs it into a hole in one of the large bulging ants' nests called *siribo*. Now secure of his revenge he watches the young wife. He observes with satisfaction the gradual and finally

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tremendous swelling of her figure. Her time comes, and, to her untold chagrin and his untold gratification, she is delivered of twins. His vengeance is complete.

In this case we may recognize at least two symbols, the twin berries standing for the twins, and the bulging *siribo* for the aggravated tumescence of the woman's pregnancy. In both of them, it would appear, their symbolic character rests upon a point of resemblance. The association is one of similarity, and the symbol might be called for short a Similarity Symbol. This is by no means to assume that the native attaches any causal value to the association, or that he is even conscious of it. Least of all can he be conscious of 'association' in the abstract. Indeed, it is only when he is taxed for an explanation that he may fall back on the Law of Similarity. In the case just cited it may well be that the whole process is an *ex post facto* fabrication. (This is more likely than the other possibility, viz. that it was a marvellous fluke.) But whether the process was ever really tried or not, it will serve to illustrate the nature of the Similarity Symbol.

Of such association there are innumerable examples. The hibiscus was a component of a mixture used in hunting-magic because, I was told, its scarlet was like the fresh blood of the pig. The root of a variety of bread-fruit was used in sun-magic because it resembled the sun simply in its red-yellow colour. The crab's claw was a suitable receptacle for the sorcerer's mixture in that it would cause the victim to crawl and grovel like a crab. Mere size is itself sufficient to make a symbol of any object where size is the quality aimed at in the desired result. This, according to native explanation, is the reason why the leaf of a towering *Boruga* tree may be planted in the same hole with the taro shoot: the taro will become a big plant because the *Boruga* is a big tree. The same reason was given for the use of *Jijuma* and *Buru* as medicines for the growing pig. A woman may be seen washing a squealing piglet with an infusion of the leaves of these

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789 811 two trees. It would seem that it is no more than the quality of bigness which they possess in common with the gigantic pig of the woman's fancy that justifies their use. Whether it was merely their size which in the first place recommended the trees *Boruga*, *Jijuma*, and *Buru* for their various magical uses I am unable to say. There may well enough have been some other more recondite quality which occurred to the man who first used them, and which has been forgotten since they became, so to speak, stock medicines. However, it is sufficient that informants should make this suggestion, viz. as to size, to show how their thoughts run. With some of the magical fertilizers of which I have spoken in Report No. 7, the resemblance is patent enough to require no explanation: instance the use of a vigorous vine as a yam medicine, or a rank river-bank plant with a somewhat elongated heart-shaped leaf as a medicine for taro.

789 754 811 Another association by virtue of which an object may assume the role of a symbol is that, generally speaking, of contact. As we have used the expression Similarity Symbol for those symbols which are based on association by similarity, so we might use the expression Contact Symbol for those which are based on association by contact or contiguity. If the magician can come by a part of the object or person upon whom he has designs, he will derive an anticipatory satisfaction from putting those designs into effect upon the part in lieu of the whole. If he cannot obtain an actual part of such object or person he will make do with something which has been closely associated. In the case of a human victim, e.g., it will be sufficient to obtain a piece of his hair, or one of those red-dyed streamers of areca spathe that the Orokaiva fastens to the tags of his greasy coiffure. It will be sufficient to obtain a tattered fragment of his bark-cloth perineal band, or a scraping of the dirt and sweat which is sometimes present in very available quantity on his skin. A most satisfactory medium is the victim's semen, which, it is said, can commonly be obtained from a

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female betrayer. Any such object or substance which has been in close association with or has belonged to the victim will serve to personify him, as it were, when the sorcerer wishes to work off his feelings.

Anything, indeed, which he has merely touched will suffice. A very common example of the magician's symbol consists of a morsel of food left over by his prospective victim—the remains of a betel-nut, for instance, or even the husk. It is for this reason that native travellers will always dispose so carefully of the remnants of their food. In their own village it does not matter over-much, because it is inhabited by familiar friends from whom they have little to fear; but in a strange village who knows how many sorcerers there may be awaiting their chance? I have watched a party of coastal carriers after a midday meal in an inland village. They had roasted some yams in the open fire and in the usual way scraped off the charred surface before eating them. Before leaving they went so far as to stamp these minute black scrapings thoroughly into the dust, and when questioned about it made no secret of their apprehensions. It is the same motive—not that of tidiness, as one was tempted to think—which sometimes makes carriers in a strange village throw their coco-nut husks into the surrounding bush for concealment, or better still into the running water for neutralization. Again, when working in his garden a man will keep a watchful eye on his *betava*, or string bag, for fear that while his back is turned an enemy should abstract some small belonging on which to work magic against him.

There is a somewhat different style of magic in which the necessity for contact is still apparent, but which it is not easy to include in the same category with the above. In this style the magical mixture is prepared first independently of the victim, and is then brought into contact with him. Sometimes such a mixture may be kept in a bamboo 'bottle'. When it is called into use the sorcerer creeps on his victim in his sleep, dips a

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named *Sovai-gapu*, or 'Ghost-wings', was recommended by the same property for the same purpose.

Perhaps the best example is provided by the ill-defined Orokaiva custom which resembles the *couvade*. Very often a husband, after the birth of his child, will avoid working in the garden. The reason is perhaps his fear of a misadventure which might in some vicarious manner affect the child; and two independent informants have given me the same curious explanation. In clearing the gardener would lay hold of the tender sapling and, as he raised his sharp axe to strike a severing blow, there would flash through his mind a horrifying simile—the neck of his new-born child. No wonder a solicitous father should stay at home!

So much for the symbols in magical procedure. They have been classified, after the laws laid down by Frazer, into Similarity Symbols and Contact Symbols. A much more detailed classification would be possible but perhaps unnecessary. The essential fact is that any association, even the remotest, may be sufficient to turn an object into a symbol, to make it personify or represent some person or object or, generally speaking, some factor in the result at which the magic-maker aims.

4. *The Logic of Magic*

It has been assumed throughout the foregoing pages that magic is in the beginning a matter of impulse. But it is a fact beyond dispute that the native practitioner does to some extent at any rate believe in his magic. It may not be correct to say that there is a universal primitive belief that 'like produces like', or that 'things which have once been in contact with each other continue to act on each other at a distance after the physical contact has been severed'. However, it is at least true that the magic-maker commonly feels that his procedure, an anticipatory representation of the result he aims at, does in some way conduce toward the realization of that result.

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789 lost: the specific retains its power, but none can tell how. If any one is able to offer an explanation it is probably, as so often with natives, merely some extempore flash of imagination, which may be wholly different from the original explanation and wholly different from what another bright native might suggest.

789 An incident will show how easily such a change from
773 symbol to specific (whether we call it degeneration or
811 sublimation) might come about. On the upper Gira is a large mass of rocks scored with curious grooves. These grooves are ascribed to the man-monster Totoima, who used to sharpen his teeth on the rocks as a man sharpens his axe on a stone. Totoima was famous as a hunter of men, and accordingly any medicine obtained from the neighbourhood of one of his many teeth-sharpening places will be recommended, by association with the hunter, as a medicine for dogs: it will improve their pig-hunting. This association was made
789 explicit by more than one informant. Now there grows
811 along the upper margin of these rocks a rare profusion of ground-orchids, among them one with a dark purple flower and (what is the significant attribute) a pale-coloured and peculiarly furry leaf. This orchid was the secret of an old man of the district who was conducting us over the historic ground. When I collected a handful of flowers which happened to show his particular variety too prominently on the outside, the old man shook his head in protest and requested me to rearrange the bouquet and make his dog-medicine rather less conspicuous. But he went so far as to confide the secret to my interpreter and factotum, one Ihipa. One should crush the leaves and make an infusion; wash the young dog and pull its limbs to make it grow quickly. He pointed to those minute white hairs with which the leaf is covered. Did they not call to mind the coat of a dog? This feature, combined with the locality association, was sufficient to make that little orchid leaf a strong dog-medicine.

Having become acquainted with the secret of the plant

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Ihipa took care to provide himself with a number of bulbs, intending to plant them in his own distant country. Presuming the plant flourishes it will be used by Ihipa according to his instructions. He will impart the secret to his nearest friends. The leaves will retain their supposed power, but it will be readily imagined that the explanation will in time be forgotten. The hairy coat of the leaf will not suggest the hairy coat of the dog unless there is always some one to point out the resemblance. And the association with the man-hunter Totoima will probably be lost sight of when once the plant has been removed from the site of Totoima's activities.

It is impossible to be sure of the reason for the use of any particular specific in the first instance; but it is equally impossible to believe that specifics originated in a causeless or haphazard manner. We can only suggest some original association or analogy which may or may not be the true one. However, it seems probable that some such associative link did in the first instance give a pseudological justification for the use of the leaf (or other object). The object was in the first instance really a symbol. In course of time the symbolism was obliterated from memory and the symbol became a specific.

While the hypothesis may cover most instances it does not necessarily cover all. We may discuss the two words *inja* and *saruka*, both of them standing for any kind of evil specific. Of the third familiar word with the same meaning, viz. *kai*, I have never heard any explanation, but it appears that *inja* is the name of a particular kind of bush vine, and *saruka* that of a tree with a highly odoriferous bark. They were both apparently typical specifics and their names have been applied to the general category of evil specifics. If a man were done to death by the use of the actual vine *inja* this fact would be recognizable from the fact that at death he would be speechless. His entrails would be strangled or tied up (*tigari*) within him as if by the strands of creeper, and it appears that he would die in a kind of intestinal cramp. This is probably